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Security Council

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Letter dated 19 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to forward the attached letter received today, 19 May 2000 from Haile Weldensae, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea, addressed to you (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Haile **Menkerios**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 19 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to inform the Security Council that the Government of the State of Eritrea reiterates its acceptance of paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of Security Council resolution 1298 (2000), adopted on 17 May 2000. Eritrea is unequivocally committed to their speedy implementation. Eritrea has accepted paragraph 2, which demands that "both parties immediately cease all military action and refrain from the further use of force", indeed superfluously, only to accentuate, once again, its total commitment to a peaceful solution. Otherwise, Ethiopia started the current offensive, this time by its own admission, as it did other offensives before this. Eritrea is only defending itself. It was thus appropriate for the Council to direct this demand to Ethiopia alone. Eritrea's persistent and consistent call for a ceasefire is all too well known to everyone.

Security Council resolution 1297 (2000) of 12 May 2000 demanded that both Eritrea and Ethiopia stop military action and accept the reconvening of proximity talks without preconditions. It gave the two sides 72 hours to comply before it took action. Eritrea accepted both conditions, thus complying fully with the resolution, whereas Ethiopia refused to stop its offensive rejecting the first and most cardinal demand. Thus, Eritrea complied with Security Council resolution 1297 (2000); Ethiopia defied it.

While the above are the facts, I must emphatically state my Government's utter surprise and disappointment with the clear imbalance of paragraph 6. The Government of Eritrea is indignant at, and takes serious exception to, the fact that paragraph 6 of the resolution unjustly applies an arms embargo on Eritrea, the victim, along with Ethiopia, the aggressor. It punishes equally Eritrea, which complied with, and Ethiopia, which defied, Security Council resolutions. It deprives Eritrea of its legitimate right to defend itself. Ethiopia has invaded Eritrea and is now occupying large areas of uncontested Eritrean territory in defiance of international law and Security Council resolutions. Ethiopia has openly declared this invasion and acknowledged its occupation of Eritrean territory, including a provincial capital in western Eritrea. Its offensive continues with the aim of "the total destruction of the Eritrean army" and thus the subjugation of Eritrea and its people to the dictate of its will.

Both resolutions 1297 (2000) and 1298 (2000) strongly condemn the resumption and continuation of fighting, but fail to condemn Ethiopia for resuming and continuing the fighting. Such a failure has encouraged Ethiopia to continue its war of aggression against Eritrea, invade and occupy larger and larger Eritrean land, killing, displacing and destroying the property of large numbers of Eritreans. Such a flagrant violation of all norms of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations, the trampling of the sovereign rights of a small member State by a bigger State, cannot and must not be tolerated by the international community, especially the Security Council. How far has Ethiopia to go in the destruction of the Eritrean State and its people before the Security Council shoulders its responsibility to condemn Ethiopia's crimes and demand that it stop?

I call upon the Security Council to condemn Ethiopia's invasion of Eritrea and its crimes on the Eritrean people, to demand Ethiopia's immediate and unconditional withdrawal from sovereign Eritrean territory and to take punitive action against Ethiopia until it complies.

(*Signed*) Haile **Weldensae**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea